

**PACD South East Region Meeting
Video Conference
April 30, 2020**

Welcome

Region Director Piper Sherburne welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m.

In attendance: Piper Sherburne, Berks; Brenda Shambaugh, PACD; Matt Miller, PACD; Molly Burns, PACD; Dean Druckenmiller, Berks; Bill McFadden, Lehigh; Ed Magargee, Delaware; Gretchen Schatschneider, Bucks; Sharon Pletchan, Northampton; Kevin Frederick, Lehigh; Linda Mackey, DEP SERO; Janet Creegan, Northampton; Kristopher Abell, PISC; Karl Brown, SCC; Charles Hanner, NRCS; Nate Pritchard, Northampton; Ted Veresink, Northampton; Jessica Buck, Montgomery; Susan Marquart, NRCS; Nick DiPaolo, Northampton; Jonathan Fox, Northampton; Jim Lawrence, Northampton; Desiree Henning-Dudley, DEP SERO; Glenn Seidel, Berks; Holly Kaplan, Lehigh; Chris Strohmaier, Chester; Lynn Stauffer, Northampton; Denise Coleman, NRCS; Karen Books, DEP.

Set Date for Next Meeting

The next PACD SE Region Meeting will take place on October 1, 2020, at Henning's Market.

Set Date for Meeting with DEP Deputy Secretary Aneca Atkinson

Brenda Shambaugh explained that DEP Deputy Secretary for Water Programs Aneca Atkinson is interested in meeting with each region to encourage and improve communication. The group determined the South East Region will meet with Deputy Secretary Atkinson on January 20, 2021, at the Berks County Conservation District.

Approval of Minutes from the Previous Meeting

Piper Sherburne called for a motion to approve the minutes of the previous meeting.

It was moved by Bill McFadden and seconded by Ed Magargee to approve the minutes of the October 31, 2019, meeting. Motion carried.

Bylaws Change to Move Armstrong to North West Region

Brenda Shambaugh explained that the Armstrong County Conservation District would like to move from the PACD South West region to the North West region, so they are in the same region for both PACD and DEP. This will require a change to the PACD Bylaws.

It was moved by Bill McFadden and seconded by Chris Strohmaier to support a PACD Bylaws change to move Armstrong County Conservation District to the North West Region. Motion carried.



PACD Report

Brenda provided verbal highlights from her written report:

- *Clean Water Academy* – PACD’s Nick Yeagy is working hard to add new learning to the Clean Water Academy on an on-going basis. We are looking to add Chapter 105 training and have spoken with DEP about the need for live web-based training, as well.
- *Multi-functional Riparian Buffer Sub-Grants* – Funding is available, and we continue to accept applications. Grantee Jessica Buck discussed Montgomery’s multi-function buffer grants, which included planting a food forest last year.
- *Leadership Development Program* – Brenda provided an update on Matt Miller’s program activities, including the regional director training sessions, which drew a total of 145 attendees. Matt Miller reported the Records Retention for Conservation Districts webinar has been postponed indefinitely but will be rescheduled at some point in the future. Sign-up is open for the June employment law webinar series with Adam Long from McNeese, Wallace and Nurick, which will include information relevant to experiences with COVID-19, including work from home policies, furloughs, etc.
- *Ag Boot Camp* – The in-class portion of the Basic session was completed via webinar April 6-9, 2020. The field portion is scheduled for September 9-11, 2020, at the Dauphin County Agriculture and Natural Resources Center. Level II is scheduled to take place August 31-September 4, 2020, also at the Dauphin County Agriculture and Natural Resources Center.
- *102/105 Technical Training* – Planning for this training is still in process. We hope to have Basic in August and Topic-based in September, if possible.
- *Fluvial Geomorphology Training* – This has been postponed until November 17-18, 2020.
- *Chesapeake Bay Education Office* – This office, which was hosted by PACD for over 20 years, has been discontinued by DEP due to funding cuts by EPA. As a result, PACD has discontinued the Clean Water Farm Award, the Manure Management Mini-grant Program, and hosting County Implementation Plans on our website. The 2020 Chesapeake Bay Program Conservation District and PA Agency Staff Meeting did take place through a different DEP grant. We are currently unsure about future meetings.
- *PACD Awards* – Applications are due now, but Brenda encouraged any districts who are interested in nominating someone to let her know.
- *Conservation District Week is May 3-9, 2020* – Brenda urged everyone to use the template letters and materials on the PACD website at www.pacd.org to reach out to their legislators for conservation district week. COVID-19 will put an incredible strain on the budget, and this is a key time to remind legislators of the good work conservation districts do.
- *NACD/NRCS Technical Assistance Grants* – Brenda asked any district interested in applying to let her know. Applications need to be submitted to her by May 22, 2020, so they can be ranked and submitted to NACD by June 1, 2020.

Presentation from the PA Invasive Species Council (PISC)

PISC Coordinator Kristopher Abell provided a presentation on behalf of the Pennsylvania Invasive Species Council. The presentation provided information about PISC, an overview of Cooperative Invasive Species Management Areas (CISMA), how these might be coordinated in Pennsylvania, and examples of other, similar, coordinated activities.

Motion on Invasive Species Policy

Piper Sherburne discussed the motion and explained her thoughts in creating it. The group discussed the motion and it was stressed that each district will be able to decide if they want to participate.

It was moved by Ed Magargee and seconded by Jessica Buck to support the following motion:

PACD encourages the PA Department of Agriculture and related agencies to develop a delegated agreement with conservation districts to provide funding and authority to battle invasive species.

Motion carried.

Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Report

- Desiree Henning-Dudley thanked everyone for sharing their COOP plan and noted they are awaiting guidance for field visits and will be sure to share that information with districts.
- Brenda Shambaugh presented the Fiscal Year Budgeting Spreadsheet for conservation district staff and encouraged anyone with questions to contact Karen.
- Karen Books reported on behalf of the Conservation District Financial Management Workgroup the SCC has established. The workgroup will oversee the development of an accounting and administrative procedures manual containing a standard chart of accounts and/or a comprehensive financial management system. They are seeking proposals from consultants to help.
- Karen also reported that Summer Kunkel is the new Acting Director for the DEP Office of Water Resources Planning.
- The group discussed the planned roll-out of ePermitting. Brenda reported she has shared district concerns with DEP.

State Conservation Commission (SCC) Report

Executive Secretary Karl Brown provided the following report:

- Karl thanked districts for sharing their Continuity of Operations (COOP) Plans with Karen Books. The SCC is trying to help districts with questions as they work through this process.
- He reviewed a COVID Guidance Update document, which provided an overview of guidance and resources available to conservation districts through the SCC, PACD, and other agencies. Resources included the PDA Nightly Bulletin, the weekly Leadership Development Program Manager Forum video conferences, guidance on site inspection and compliance during COVID 19, the SCC Weekly Training and Meeting Schedule, the PACD COVID 19 Website Portal, and ACH (Electronic Payment) Support.
- He reviewed a draft document defining the new Conservation District Advisory Committee. The first meeting was held, and there is a vacancy in the South East.
- He discussed the Draft Conservation District Drone Policy.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Report

Charles Hanner provided highlights from the NRCS Conservation Update for the Southeast Region:

- The field offices are staffed with no more than one employee at any one time. Other staff are teleworking but are available to continue doing field visits and conservation planning while maintaining social distancing.
- He referenced an article on the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program, which has been active in Berks and Schuylkill Counties over the past year.
- The soil survey team is working on updates.
- NRCS has begun the process of assigning Ecological Sciences Job Approval Authority (ESJAA), which is similar to NRCS engineering job approval.
- Farm Bill Allocations are in line with those from last year. They just ended the first round of EQIP sign-up. ACEF sign-ups are active.
- The Pennsylvania Conservation Innovation Grant deadline has been extended to June 15.
- They are closing out Emergency Watershed Protection work from the last round.
- He reviewed the training schedule and noted it has been adapted due to COVID-19.
- Susan Marquart reported they recently awarded their classic RCPP grants. PDA is the lead partner for the \$9.9 million Kittatiny Ridge project for easements on agricultural land and sensitive areas. The Audobon Society of Western PA is the lead partner for the \$1.1 million Buffalo Creek Watershed Conservation Alliance grant for conservation planning and wildlife practices in Armstrong, Butler, and Allegheny counties. Susan congratulated Berks County Conservation District for the third project, which is for Ag BMPs in the Chesapeake Bay, with Berks as lead partner, for \$2.2 million. She noted they are taking applications for RCPP alternative funding arrangements through May 29.
- Denise Coleman reviewed some of the program deadlines that have been extended and provided updates on training, particularly as it relates to conservation planning certification.

Regional Information Sharing

The floor was opened for district information sharing, but no reports were forthcoming.

Adjournment

It was moved by Ed Magargee and seconded by Bill McFadden to adjourn the meeting at 12:03 p.m. Motion carried.